



Infectious Disease and Flood Water

Disease Risks and Sewage Exposure

Flood water often contains raw sewage. Raw sewage can contain certain germs such as bacteria, viruses, and parasites. The risk of illness depends on how you were exposed to the flood water or sewage and how long you were exposed.

- The most common mode of infection is through ingestion (swallowing tiny bits from your hands or from contaminated foods or water).
- Skin contact poses a health threat if you have an open wound.

The risk of infection when handling sewage or flood water can be **reduced significantly** by effective and immediate clean-up and by taking appropriate safety precautions.

Some germs in sewage or in water contaminated with sewage:

- **Bacteria** (examples: E. coli, salmonella) may cause diarrhea, fever, cramps, or vomiting.
- **Parasite** (example: giardia) may cause diarrhea and stomach cramps.
- **Viruses** (example: Norovirus) may cause vomiting and diarrhea.

Safety Precautions

- Assume that anything touched by sewage is contaminated. This includes most of the flood water from the September 2013 floods.
- Avoid sewage-contaminated water if possible.
- Follow any boil water or bottled water advisories in your community if there is any sewage or other contamination of your water supply.
- Do not eat or drink in areas near sewage.
- If you've been in contact with flood water, wash your hands well with soap and clean water before eating or touching your mouth or face.
- Immediately wash and disinfect any cut or scrape that comes into contact with flood water.
- Shower and change out of your clothes if you are in contact with flood water. Launder clothes separately or throw them out.
- Wash your hands with soap and clean water after touching any surfaces or objects that may have been contaminated with flood water.
- Vaccinations: If you may have been exposed to sewage in flood water, you need to be up-to-date on your shots for tetanus and diphtheria.
 - Adults should have had a shot within the last 10 years.
 - Children should be up to date on their regular vaccinations, which include these shots.
- Contact a doctor if you become sick.



Hand washing steps:

1. Use soap and warm running water.
2. Scrub hands for at least 20 seconds; use a nail brush.
3. Wash all surfaces:
 - Between fingers
 - Under fingernails
 - Back of hands
 - Wrists
4. Rinse well and dry hands with a clean paper towel.